



Academic Quality and Workforce

# Autism Grant Program: Annual Progress Report

**DRAFT**

**July 2018**

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### Agency Mission

The mission of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) is to provide leadership and coordination for the Texas higher education system and to promote access, affordability, quality, success, and cost efficiency through *60x30TX*, resulting in a globally competitive workforce that positions Texas as an international leader.

### Agency Vision

The THECB will be recognized as an international leader in developing and implementing innovative higher education policy to accomplish our mission.

### Agency Philosophy

The THECB will promote access to and success in quality higher education across the state with the conviction that access and success without quality is mediocrity and that quality without access and success is unacceptable.

The Coordinating Board's core values are:

**Accountability:** We hold ourselves responsible for our actions and welcome every opportunity to educate stakeholders about our policies, decisions, and aspirations.

**Efficiency:** We accomplish our work using resources in the most effective manner.

**Collaboration:** We develop partnerships that result in student success and a highly qualified, globally competent workforce.

**Excellence:** We strive for excellence in all our endeavors.

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age or disability in employment or the provision of services.

## Background

In 2015, the 84th Texas Legislature appropriated \$8.1 million to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to make competitive grant awards to Texas public general academic institutions (GAIs) that conduct research and/or provide treatment to children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). In 2017, the 85th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, continued support for the program, and expanded eligibility by authorizing the participation of Texas independent universities and health-related institutions. Senate Bill 1, Article III, Rider 50, directed the Coordinating Board to offer three categories of funding to eligible institutions.

The following briefly summarizes the three categories of the grant award in Fiscal Years 2016 and 2017:

### Parent-directed Treatment

- Parent-directed Treatment – total available in each fiscal year of \$2,250,000, for research centers that serve a combined total of at least 750 children with ASD annually through parent-direct treatment methods.

### Teacher/Paraprofessional Training

- Board-Certified Behavior Analyst Training for Teachers/Paraprofessionals – total available in each fiscal year of \$950,000, to autism research centers that serve a combined total of at least 2,547 children with ASD per year by training teachers and/or paraprofessionals. Teachers/paraprofessionals may be in public and/or private institutions, teaching grades prekindergarten through 12th grade.

### Innovative Treatment Models

- Research, Development, and Evaluation of Innovative Autism Treatment Models – total amount available in each fiscal year of \$700,000, to one or more autism research centers to research, develop, and evaluate innovative autism treatment models that provide treatment to the greatest number of children with ASD.

The Coordinating Board administers the Autism Grant Program (AGP) through a competitive grant application process. Grant recipients provide treatments through multiple approaches: conventional treatments (behavioral analysis), innovative treatments, treatments in the public school system, and treatments at home with parents and caregivers.

The Coordinating Board's AGP has a target for its recipients to serve 6,594 children with ASD for grants awarded in fiscal years 2016 and 2017. As of April 2018, grant recipients have treated 12,893 children with ASD in the first grant cycle, which ends in June 2018. An additional 238 children with ASD were treated under a second grant period, which will run through June 2019, for a combined total of 13,131 children with ASD served. The program is currently meeting its target for the Parent-directed Treatment and exceeding its target for the Behavior Analyst Training for Teachers/Paraprofessionals.

**Table 1.** Autism Grant Program Categories and Service: August 2016 through April 2018

<b>Autism Grant Program Category</b>	<b>Total Amount</b>	<b>Children w/ASD Served to Date</b>	<b>Teachers/ Paraprofessionals Served to Date</b>
Parent-directed Treatment	\$4,500,000	1,225	
Behavior Analyst Training for Teachers/Paraprofessionals	\$1,900,000	11,533	1,508
Innovative Autism Treatment Models	\$1,400,000	135	

Source: Coordinating Board

The AGP also included \$150,000 per fiscal year for administrative costs, which the Coordinating Board uses to support staff salaries, external reviewers, and other related administrative costs.

The initial ASD grant awards were made in all three funding categories in Fiscal Year (FY) 2016, and a second round of awards were made to support Parent-directed Treatment in FY 2017. The initial grants end in June 2018 and the second grant awards for the Parent-directed Treatment will end in June 2019.

## **Program Development**

Rules for the AGP were established using the Coordinating Board's negotiated rulemaking process with input from stakeholders, including representatives from Texas public universities, the Texas Autism Research and Resource Center, the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), and the Texas Council on Autism and Pervasive Developmental Disorders. Following the negotiated rulemaking process, the Coordinating Board adopted rules for the program in April 2016.

## **Selection Process**

The AGP is a competitive grant, and applications are reviewed by Coordinating Board staff and external reviewers. To assist in the selection process, the Coordinating Board contracted with two external reviewers, one with primary expertise in parent-based treatment, and one with primary expertise in teacher/paraprofessional training. Another external reviewer with expertise in ASD grant projects volunteered from the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC).

Each application was reviewed by a three-member team comprised of the Coordinating Board grant administrator, an additional Coordinating Board staff member, and an external reviewer. Proposals were assessed based on criteria described in the RFA, including the projected number of children with ASD to be served, feasibility of the timeline, attainability of the goals, long-term influence of the project past the grant period, management structure, plans for evaluation, sufficiency and economy of the budget, and qualifications of the directors and key staff.

## Fiscal Years 2016-2018 Autism Grant Program Awards

### Parent-directed Treatment – Initial Award Cycle

In the Parent-directed Treatment category, the Coordinating Board funded six applications. The following provides a brief overview of each of the FY 2016 awardees.

**Texas A&M University, Center of Disability and Development.** The Texas A&M University's AGP grant project offers a program in homes and online to train parents in communication strategies for their children with ASD. The program expanded its reach to include families who live in counties with relatively high poverty rates.

Total award: \$498,599  
Expenditures to date: \$322,458  
Parent/children pairs projected to be served: 170  
Parent/children pairs served to date: 177

**Texas State University, Clinic for Autism Research, Evaluation, and Support (CARES).** The Texas State University's AGP grant project offers families bilingual instruction in Applied Behavioral Analysis treatments. The project offers training to parents in both small group and one-on-one sessions.

Total award: \$105,548  
Expenditures to date: \$75,295  
Parent/children pairs projected to be served: 37  
Parent/children pairs served to date: 25

**University of Houston-Clear Lake, Center for Autism and Developmental Disabilities.** The University of Houston-Clear Lake AGP grant project offers communication and behavior management assessment training to Houston-area families. The project's reports show that participants in the study are showing high improvement rates. Two children with severe ASD demonstrated a 100 percent reduction in the problem behavior.

Total award: \$330,600  
Expenditures to date: \$274,328  
Parent/children pairs projected to be served: 111  
Parent/children pairs served to date: 59

**University of North Texas, Kristin Farmer Autism Center.** The University of North Texas AGP grant project offers school readiness training to parents via home visits to low-income and underserved populations. The project is ahead of schedule and will likely exceed its original target number of children served before the end of the two-year grant period.

Total award: \$248,632  
Expenditures to date: \$116,715  
Parent/children pairs projected to be served: 100  
Parent/children pairs served to date: 80

**The University of Texas at Austin, Speech and Hearing Center.** The University of Texas at Austin's AGP grant project offers five courses to parents in social communication training. The project reports show measurable results in the communication skills of the children of the participating parents.

Total award: \$397,991  
Expenditures to date: \$218,925  
Parent/children pairs projected to be served: 300  
Parent/children pairs served to date: 185

**The University of Texas at San Antonio, Teacher Education Autism Model (TEAM).** The University of Texas at San Antonio's AGP grant project offers ABA training to military families facing issues relating to frequent deployments and relocations. The project has just recently begun training with its first cohort, and it has been expanded to include a wider range of families while still prioritizing those in the military.

Total award: \$459,976  
Expenditures to date: \$227,683  
Parent/children projected to be served: 550  
Parent/children served to date: 461

## Teacher/Paraprofessional Training

In the Teacher/Paraprofessional Training Category, the Coordinating Board funded six applications. The following provides a brief overview of each project.

**Sam Houston State University, Low Incidence Disabilities and Autism Program.** Sam Houston State University's AGP grant project offers a course for Special Education teachers to become licensed Behavior Technicians. The course began in June 2017, and the first students began training in July.

Total award: \$150,100  
Expenditure to date: \$26,746  
Children projected to be served: 400  
Children served to date: 220  
Teachers projected to be served: 20  
Teacher served to date: 11

**Texas A&M University, Center on Disability and Development.** The Texas A&M University's AGP project provides professional development, a practicum, and Behavior Technician training to teachers via distance education. The project reaches out to residents of counties with relatively high poverty rates.

Total award: \$465,548  
Expenditures to date: \$310,495  
Children projected to be served: 1,300  
Children served to date: 1,719  
Teachers projected to be served: 240  
Teachers served to date: 182

**Texas Tech University, Burkhart Center for Autism Education and Research.**

The Texas Tech University's AGP project offers three-day workshops on campus to teach Functional Behavior Assessment techniques. The program has proved popular, and there is a waiting list of teachers who would like to participate.

Total award: \$443,512  
Expenditures to date: \$124,633  
Children projected to be served: 2,250  
Children served to date: 1,713  
Teachers projected to be served: 150  
Teachers served to date: 75

**Texas State University, Clinic for Autism Research, Evaluation and Support (CARES).**

Texas State University's AGP project expands its existing Applied Behavioral Analysis teacher training programs to include behavioral skills training. The project is serving twice the number of children with ASD than originally anticipated by this time.

Total award: \$178,537  
Expenditures to date: \$145,630  
Children projected to be served: 484  
Children served to date: 678  
Teachers projected to be served: 82  
Teachers served to date: 75

**University of Houston-Clear Lake, Center for Autism and Developmental Disabilities.**

The University of Houston-Clear Lake's AGP project offers Applied Behavioral Analysis training for Houston-area teachers with three or more students with ASD in their classrooms. The project is ahead of schedule in the number of children served.

Total award: \$229,598  
Expenditures to date: \$200,000  
Children projected to be served: 664  
Children served to date: 944  
Teachers projected to be served: 600  
Teachers served to date: 414

**The University of Texas at San Antonio, Teacher Education Autism Model (TEAM).**

The University of Texas at San Antonio's AGP project expands an existing program to include Special Education teachers in rural regions who reach many children with ASD in the course of a year.

Total award: \$432,705  
Expenditures to date: \$263,051  
Children projected to be served: 5,094  
Children served to date: 6,279  
Teachers projected to be served: 960  
Teachers served to date: 858

## Innovative Treatment Models

In the Innovative Treatment category, the Coordinating Board provided funding for two awards.

**University of North Texas, Department of Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology.** The University of North Texas' Innovative Treatment Model evaluates techniques to improve auditory processing so that students with ASD can increase attention and engagement in classrooms. The first students are just completing the study and the early results are positive.

Total award: \$378,885  
Expenditures to date: \$231,885  
Children projected to be served: 60  
Children served to date: 23

**The University of Texas at Dallas, UT-D/Callier Autism Treatment Research Center.** The University of Texas at Dallas Innovative Treatment Model is researching the effectiveness of visual-based early intervention strategies to improve social interaction, attention, and play skills. The project reports strong early results with students' measurable improvement in eye contact, social engagement, and verbal reciprocity.

Total award: \$980,712  
Expenditures to date: \$836,668  
Children projected to be served: 252  
Children served to date: 112

## Fiscal Years 2017-2019 Autism Grant Program Awards

In FY 2017, \$2,499,050 was available to make additional awards under the Parent-directed Treatment category. A second RFA was issued in April 2017. Eight applications were received for Parent-directed Treatment, and six were selected for awards. The following provide information about the six awards, which will continue through June 2019.

### Parent-directed Treatment

In the Parent-directed Treatment category, the Coordinating Board funded six applications. The following provides a brief overview of each of the FY 2017 awardees.

**Texas A&M University, Center of Disability and Development.** The Texas A&M University's AGP grant project offers training to parents and community partners (including teachers and librarians) to help children with ASD learn to read and increase literacy rates.

Total award: \$450,668  
Expenditures to date: \$132,037  
Parent/children pairs projected to be served: 45  
Parent/children pairs served to date: 8

**Texas State University, Clinic for Autism Research, Evaluation, and Support (CARES).** The Texas State University's AGP grant project will train 40 parents in role-play and modeling of intervention procedures.

Total award: \$142,877  
Expenditures to date: \$32,809  
Parent/children pairs projected to be served: 40  
Parent/children pairs served to date: 3

**University of Houston-Clear Lake, Center for Autism and Developmental Disabilities.** The University of Houston-Clear Lake AGP grant project offers five programs in communication, social skills, and problem behaviors, depending upon the needs of each individual family.

Total award: \$393,751  
Expenditures to date: \$76,026  
Parent/children pairs projected to be served: 72  
Parent/children pairs served to date: 9

**University of North Texas, Kristin Farmer Autism Center.** The University of North Texas AGP grant project offers school readiness training to parents via home visits to low-income and underserved populations. The project is ahead of schedule and will likely exceed its original target number of children served before the end of the two-year grant period.

Total award: \$447,550  
Expenditures to date: \$49,243  
Parent/children pairs projected to be served: 100  
Parent/children pairs served to date: 141

**The University of Texas at Austin, Center for Disability Studies.** The University of Texas at Austin's AGP grant project offers in-home instruction in role-playing, observation, and instruction to parents of three-year-old children.

Total award: \$439,531

Expenditures to date: \$145,000

Parent/children pairs projected to be served: 460

Parent/children pairs served to date: 55

**The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, Department of Pediatrics.** The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston's Department of Pediatrics AGP grant project lays the groundwork for an extensive study of how probiotics and improvements in children's gastro-intestinal health can reduce ASD-related behavior problems.

Total award: \$375,618

Expenditures to date: \$65,501

Parent/children pairs projected to be served: 24

Parent/children pairs served to date: 22

## **Fiscal Years 2018-2020 Autism Grant Program Awards**

An FY 2018 RFA with funding available for all three categories of the grant program was released in May 2018, with notification of awards anticipated in June 2018.

The most recent awards information and an overview of the AGP are available at [www.thecb.state.tx.us/agp](http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/agp).



This document is available on the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board website:  
<http://www.thecb.state.tx.us>

**For more information contact:**

Melinda Valdez, EdD, Program Director  
Academic Quality and Workforce  
Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board  
P.O. Box 12788  
Austin, TX 78711  
PHONE (512) 427-6115  
FAX (512) 427-6168  
[melinda.valdez@thecb.state.tx.us](mailto:melinda.valdez@thecb.state.tx.us)